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AUTHOR Sara, Nathir G.
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ABSTRACT

Authoritarianism is a negative factor in learning as well as a social problem. If teachers can be trained to counter authoritarianism, they can begin to break the vicious circle of people growing up in an authoritarian culture, becoming authoritarian themselves, and molding their institutions and overall behaviors in an authoritarian fashion. This study was designed to examine the effect of a treatment on the authoritarian level of a group of education students from highly authoritarian societies. Experimental and control groups of graduate students at the American University of Beirut were studied to determine specific elements in the learning-teaching process that would produce greater tolerance among learners. Such elements could then become primary components in a regular program of instruction offered to a group of learners to produce the desired effect. The findings reported confirm that authoritarianism may be reduced through learning experiences specially designed for this purpose, but not through general education. Questions for further study include the permanence of change in attitude and whether different treatment is required depending upon the degree of authoritarianism demonstrated. The findings of the study can be implemented in both preservice and inservice training programs. (JMF)

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EDUCATION FOR TOLERANCE:
AN EXPERIMENT IN COUNTER-AUTHORITARIANISM

by

Nathir G. Sara

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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EDUCATION FOR TOLERANCE:

AN EXPERIMENT IN COUNTER-AUTHORITATIANISM

Problem

Authoritarianism has been a subject of rather intensive study since World War II. Eric Fromm (6) saw the authoritarian person as a refugee from freedom, a person who relies on submissive-dominant relationships as substitutes for the more genuine and harmonious relationships his more autonomous brother enjoys. Jean-Paul Sartre (18) considered antisemitism a manifestation of authoritarianism. A study of authoritarianism and leadership by Sanford (17) led to the conclusion that authoritarian persons show preference for directive leadership and tend to reject leaders who show weakness. Such persons generally act as willing members of undemocratic groups; they also tend to be mistrustful and suspicious of others as was revealed by Adorno and others (1), and later confirmed by Deutch (2) and Halverson and Shore (7).

The publication of The Authoritarian Personality (1) triggered a large number of studies. The California F-Scale has been used in numerous studies to explore various aspects of authoritarianism, especially as it relates to education. Findings of several studies indicate that authoritarianism is negatively associated with a number of traits that schools

generally seek to develop. Hess and Lindner (8) found a negative correlation between dogmatism (a correlary of authoritarianism) and self-esteem. A study by Eisenman and Cherry (4) and another by Luck and Grunder (11) established a negative correlation between authoritarianism and critical thinking ability. Although no correlation was found between authoritarianism and teaching effectiveness (Vermillion 1965), teacher-pupil rapport is negatively related to teachers' authoritarianism as reported by Leeds (9). The findings on authoritarianism among camp counselors are practically parallel (19). Furthermore, authoritarianism and dogma seem to have a direct bearing on learning per se. According to Vacchiane (21) dogmatism is involved in the learning process in that it affects the individual's sensitivity to certain aspects of content. Ehrlich (3) has established a tendency of non-dogmatic individuals to learn more of their classroom exposure and to retain their knowledge significantly longer than do highly dogmatic individuals. Test anxiety, on the other hand, is positively correlated with authoritarianism as established by Rebhun (16).

In addition to being a negative factor in learning, authoritarianism is a far reaching social problem. Authoritarian persons, by definition, are anti-democratic. They have little tolerance of others and tend to force their "truth" on others. They are suspicious of others, especially those who hold different views or subscribe to different values. They cannot function well in group situations except under autocratic rule

in which case tension and in-group hostility often build up as shown by White and Lippit (23). Authoritarian people are basically incapable of self government. It is naive to expect guarantees of civil liberties and constitutional government in a country where the average citizen denies his neighbor the very freedom he expects his government to avail him.

It is no accident that dictatorial regimes are so common in many parts of Africa, Asia and South America; authoritarian governments are simply a part of their own authoritarian people. In other words, a military junta attempting overthrow of a legitimate government would find its task rather easy, in fact logical, in a society where people themselves are authoritarian.*

However, there is another side to the coin. It is often argued, even in authoritarian regimes, that education is a major means of preparing a populace for self government. In certain instances (as in Iran, Uganda, Bangladesh, etc.) pronouncements by presidents and other leaders reflect, at least at the verbal level, an aspiration for achievement of the democratic ideal. Graduate students from a number of countries in Asia and Africa studying at the American University of Beirut seem to be highly committed to principles of constitutional government, civil liberties, and tolerance to diversity of beliefs. Yet, the same

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*Prothro and Melikian (15) report newspaper headlines in Lebanon (in 1952) calling for a dictatorial government to take over to save the country. Many other examples can be found in several other countries today.

leaders who verbally favour a constitutional form of government often rule not by consent of their people but by the power of arms; the same graduate students who defend civil liberties-- verbally -- and seem to aspire to democratic rule are themselves highly authoritarian individuals as evidenced by studies such as those by Prothro and Melikian (15) and Papastavrou (13).

The problem, therefore, is not simply what people aspire to achieve-- India, for example, has always aspired to achieve a measure of economic affluence yet she has not conquered the threat of starvation. Rather, the problem is how to break the vicious circle of people growing up in an authoritarian culture, becoming authoriatarian themselves and molding their institutions and overall behaviors in an authoritarian fashion. How can an authoritarian teacher, for example, teach in any style other than that of authoritarian teachers?

In attempting to answer the above question, one must first give up thinking in terms of absolutes. An authoritarian culture will not change overnight: personality of the individual is not readily receptive to basic change. However, some modification can be affected as a result of certain influences. The school can provide such influences and the channel must be the teacher himself. If teachers can be trained to counter authoritarianism, their task then would be to break the vicious circle. They would introduce the force needed to counter a basic cultural influence.

Purpose

This study was designed to examine, in an exploratory fashion, the effect of a treatment on the authoritarian level of a group of education students from highly authoritarian societies. The first part of the study aimed at determining specific elements in the learning-teaching process that would produce greater tolerance among learners. Such elements would become primary components in a regular program of instruction offered to a group of learners to produce the desired effect.

The second part of the study aimed at measuring the degree of success, if any, that the experiment might achieve.

Procedures

1. Subjects: The sample consisted of two groups of graduate students enrolled in education courses at the American University of Beirut (Beirut, Lebanon). The first group -- the experimental group -- was made up of 35 students who enrolled in a course on instructional supervision during 1971-72 (19 students) and 1972-73 (16 students). The control group consisted of 46 students who were enrolled in four other graduate courses taught by the same instructor during the same period: 1971-72 and 1972-73. Where a student was enrolled in the course on supervision and any of the other courses, he was included only in the experimental group. Naturally, duplicates were screened out so that subjects were counted only once.

In both groups the subjects were greatly diverse in national background. In approximately similar ratios the two groups were composed of students from Arab Countries and Bangladesh, Cyprus, Iran, Pakistan and the United States. The experimental group included one student from Britain as well.

2. Instrument: The 19-item condensed F-Scale (See Appendix I) which is part of the original 22-item California F-Scale developed by Adorno et al (1) was used in this study. The scale was modified and established valid in the Middle East by Prothro and Melikian (15), and also by Papastavrou (13). Melikian (12) established a reliability coefficient of 0.65 for Arab students, and Papastavrou (13) computed a reliability coefficient of 0.86 for Greek Cypriot subjects.

The instrument consists of statements of opinion with which a subject may agree or disagree. Instructions request respondents to state their positions on each statement by marking one of four categories: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Using a numerical value of 1 to 4, the scale renders a total score ranging between 19 and 76.

A pre-test was given the experimental group and the control group during the first week of the semester. A post-test was administered to both groups at the end of the semester. The purpose of testing was explained to the subjects as an attempt to establish norms for the Middle East in regard to certain beliefs and opinions.

3. Processing of Data: The following steps were followed:

a. A total score was computed for each subject.

b. Four sets of data were thus obtained: a pre- and post-test for each of the two groups.

c. The mean difference (gain) for each group was computed.

d. The method of pooling variances was followed (20):

$$\text{Pooled } S^2 = \frac{\sum d_1^2 + \sum d_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}$$

$$\text{Then: } S_{\bar{D}_1 - \bar{D}_2} = \sqrt{S^2 \left(\frac{n_1 + n_2}{n_1 n_2}\right)}$$

Where: $\sum d_1^2$ is the sum of squares of the gain in the experimental group,

$\sum d_2^2$ is the sum of squares of the gain in the control group,

n_1 is number of subjects in the experimental goup,

n_2 is number of subjects in the control group,

$S_{\bar{D}_1 - \bar{D}_2}$ is the standard deviation of the mean difference in gain.

e. The t test was used to determine if gain in the experimental group was significant, as follows:

$$t = \frac{\bar{D}_1 - \bar{D}_2}{S_{\bar{D}_1 - \bar{D}_2}}$$

4. Experimental Treatment: The rationale developed for this experiment was very simple: to involve the experimental group in anti-authoritarian experiences and to do so consistently for a whole semester. Shuch experiences would serve as "anti-toxins" and would reduce the subjects' tendencies for dogma, inflexibility of belief,

and preference for authority over reason and group processes.

A basic element in the approach used in this study recognized the essential importance of both dimensions of classroom operations: the content (curriculum) and the process (method) of teaching. The troublesome part here was in developing content to counter authoritarianism without appearing to do so. The purpose for this was to avoid any bias -- in an experimental sense -- which might result from topics dealing directly with authoritarianism. Modifications in the process of teaching were more easily designed: the instructor consciously attempted to embody the spirit of counter-authoritarianism.

Content of a new course titled "Seminar in Instructional Supervision" was structured to serve the purpose of this study. A course outline was prepared so as to deal with various aspects of supervision and at the same time to endeavor to establish a philosophy based on tolerance and mutual acceptance. The course outline listed several topics, or units of study, starting with a review of the history of supervision (noting the shift from inspection to a more human-relations-cum-scientific approach). Other units introduced systems theory and concepts of group dynamics, and presented a review of research on teaching. The focal point of the course was a unit dealing with the process of instructional supervision itself. This unit aimed at development of a rationale for supervision, preparation of a supervisory plan for each teacher or group of teachers, etiquette of classroom visitation, specific

techniques of making objective observations and collecting data on classroom behavior, and the post-visitation conference with the teacher. Among the techniques of data collection and analysis emphasized in the course was the Flanders' Verbal Interaction Analysis System (5). This system is used by teachers and supervisors to assess several aspects of teacher-student and student-student verbal interaction. Having noted the dominance of what Flanders calls "direct teaching" in several of the countries of the region, the instructor emphasized differences between direct and indirect teachers and stimulated an extensive review of the literature on the effects of both approaches to teaching. The course employed simulation and role playing and ended in a practicum during which students engaged in the actual process of supervision as they visited teachers in neighboring schools for the purpose of observation.

The role of the instructor was carefully structured. Students were given the course outline and invited to select topics on which they would prepare reports mostly in groups. The instructor's role was limited to a few basic lectures, coordination of class activities, questioning and presenting summaries of material reported by students. Classroom work was the responsibility of all. The group was given one basic guideline: that the highest form of learning takes place when the learner is actively involved and when he is able to receive information from different sources, sythesize it and integrate that which he accepts into his own

fund of knowledge. What learns becomes his, but does not necessarily represent a final and irrevocable truth.

The contents and process were thus integrated to create an open climate and to offer opportunities for students to interact with each other, with the instructor and, most important of all, with their own private beliefs and values. An example is offered to illustrate. The group was receiving a report on supervisory visits to the classroom when the issue was raised as to whether to make announced or unannounced visits. The rationale for the first position was seen by its advocates as emphasizing respect for the teacher, showing trust in him and enabling him to plan his work according to the purpose(s) of the supervisory visit. Supporters of the other position advocating unannounced visits presented a different rationale. They believed that unannounced visits "kept teachers on their toes," and that they were the best means available to the supervisor to get a real picture of what actually went on in the classroom. During the discussion that followed students started to see a relationship between the two sides of the issue, their experiences as teachers, their assumptions about human nature, and concepts they were encountering in their readings such as "clinical supervision" and "shared decision-making." Discussion also extended to topics dealing with the structure of society and patterns of control, and with the overall relationship of government and governed, parents and children, and teachers and learners.

The control group, made up of students enrolled in other courses taught by the same instructor during the same period, received no deliberate treatment. The contents of these courses were educational administration, curriculum development, and educational research. The material dealt with was the conventional graduate textbook type of content. The role of the instrutor was deliberately controlled so as to conform to the more formal role of lecturer, discussion leader and evaluator. There were some problems, however. A few of the subjects were enrolled in both the course on supervision and one of the other courses. On one occasion, for example, one of them questioned the difference in the approaches used by the instructor in the two courses. He pointed out that the instructor was "indirect" in his approach in the former but he was "direct" in the latter, referring to Flanders' two types of teaching. It was explained to him that if that were true, it was simply because contents of the latter course were such that they perhaps required greater direction by the teacher.

Results

The design used in this study called for measuring the gain (negative gain in this case representing lower post-test scores) observed in the two groups. As outlined in the section dealing with procedures the t test was used to determine whetehr the

experimental group differed significantly from the control group in its gain on the F-Scale. Below are the findings:

1. Both groups were highly authoritarian. The means on the pre-tests, for example, were 51.0 and 51.2, and the ranges were 32-70 and 32-65 for the experimental and control groups, respectively. Taking into consideration the fact that the instrument yields a minimum score of 19 and a maximum score of 76, it becomes obvious that the scores obtained by the subjects of this study are high indeed.

Table I

MEANS AND RANGES OF SCORES OBTAINED BY TWO GROUPS

	N	Means		Ranges	
		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental	35	51.0	46.9	32-70	33-63
Control	46	51.2	50.0	32-65	31-60

Table 2

GAIN, POOLED S^2 AND t

FOR TWO GROUPS

	N	$\bar{D}$	Σd^2	Pooled S^2	$S_{\bar{D}_1 - \bar{D}_2}$	t
Experimental	35	-4.03	499			
				20.5	1.01	2.802*
Control	46	-1.20	1,119			

*Significant at 0.01 with 79 df.

2. Table 2 shows the basic statistics arrived at by the method of pooling variances. The difference in gain achieved by the two groups is significant: $P < 0.01$. A significant reduction of authoritarianism is observed in the experimental group and can be attributed to the treatment.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings reported above confirm that authoritarianism may be reduced through learning experiences specially designed for this purpose. This finding is consistant with results of a study by Levinson and Shermerhorn (10) who report reduction of authoritarianism among participants in an intergroup relations workshop.

It must be noted that both the workshop and the present study specifically aimed at reducing authoritarianism. However, the literature is not altogether clear on this issue. Two studies have been identified in which reduction of authoritarianism was a function of general learning; that is, the learning experiences provided were not specifically designed to counter authoritarianism. According to a longitudinal study by Plant (14), authoritarianism decreases regularly as a function of college attendance. Consistent with that is a finding by Scarr (19) that authoritarianism declined among students who enrolled in a course in human development.

However, implications of the two studies referred to are different: one of them was longitudinal while the other was limited to effects of learning over a short period of one semester.

The present study is different from all others cited above in that most of the subjects were highly authoritarian; the majority were members of Asian and African societies which are highly authoritarian--as pointed out by Prothro and Melikian (15) and Papastavrou (13), and also as reflected by the F-scores of the subjects themselves reported in Table I above. Since the control group did not show reduction of authoritarianism, it may be concluded that general education as such does not have a noticeable effect in promoting tolerance among highly authoritarian subjects; at least no short-term results were observed in this study. This, of course, is a confirmation of the popular belief among educators that schools generally serve more as instruments of cultural transmission and perpetuation than as agents

of change. It appears, then, that at least in highly authoritarian cultures, reduction of authoritarianism cannot be achieved as a by-product of general learning, and that deliberate and concentrated effort and special programs are needed to affect the desired change. An issue arises here: do highly authoritarian subjects (e.g.Asians and Africans) require a treatment that is different from that needed to reduce authoritarianism among their more tolerant counterparts (e.g. Americans)? In other words, is the difference merely quantitative or is it qualitative as well?

A second issue is concerned with the permanence of change evidenced in the experimental group. Authoritarianism, like other personality traits is deeply-rooted. The fact that it can be changed does not preclude the tendency of subjects to revert to earlier behavior as psychotherapists know only too well. It was not within the scope of the present study to examine this question, but a safe prediction would be that reinforcement of the initial treatment be required to maintain the changed status. If a school sets reduction of authoritarianism as one of its goals, more than a single treatment would probably be need to make that change more lasting. Further research can shed light on this issue.

The findings of this study add greater importance to teacher education in authoritarin cultures. The objective of democratizing society through education is proven feasible; the means of achieving it are available and can be improved with further research and experimentation.

A new dimension may enter the process of training teachers. Modified curricula and methods are needed so as to produce a new generation of teachers who are less authoritarian than their predecessors and who, in their turn, may serve as counter-authoritarian agents. But limiting the suggested change to pre-service education of teachers may not be sufficient. Upon entering the teaching profession new teachers may be absorbed by an already established system with its authoritarian mode of operation and patterns of interaction, and they may revert to earlier authoritarian patterns. In order to minimize this danger older teachers and administrators should be subjected to similar counter-authoritarian influences, In-service education programs may be developed containing in both content and process the elements of counter-authoritarian influence. The outcome would be slow and gradual, but with effort and determination it can be achieved.

APPENDIX I

Here are some statements of opinion with which some people agree and others disagree. Indicate your agreement or disagreement with every one of the following statements as follows:

Circle SD if you Strongly Disagree with the statement.

Circle D if you Disagree even a little with the statement.

Circle A if you Agree even a little with the statement.

Circle SA if you Strongly Agree with the statement.

1.	Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should have.	SD D A SA
2.	No weakness or difficulty can hold us back if we have enough will power	SD D A SA
3.	Science has its place, but there are many important things that can never possibly be understood by the human mind.	SD D A SA
4.	Human nature being what it is, there will always be war and conflict.	SD D A SA
5.	Every person should have complete faith in some supernatural power whose decisions he obeys without questions.	SD D A SA
6.	When a person has a problem or worry, it is best for him not to think about it, but to keep busy with more cheerful things.	SD D A SA
7.	What the youth needs most is strict discipline, rugged determination, and the will to work and fight for family and country.	SD D A SA
8.	An insult to our honor should always be punished.	SD D A SA

9. Nowadays when so many kinds of people move around and mix together so much, a person has to protect himself especially carefully against catching an infection or disease from them — SD D A SA

10. What my country needs most, more than laws and political programs, is a few courages, tireless, devoted leaders in whom the people can put their faith. — SD D A SA

11. Sex crimes, such as rape and attacks on children, deserve more than mere imprisonment: such criminals ought to be publicly whipped or worse. — SD D A SA

12. People can be divided into two distinct classes: the weak and the strong. — SD D A SA

13. There is hardly anything lower than a person who does not feel a great love, gratitude, and respect for his parents. — SD D A SA

14. Nowadays more people are prying into matters that should remain personal and private. — SD D A SA

15. Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, croocked, and feeble-minded people. — SD D A SA

16. If people would talk less and work more, everybody would be better off. — SD D A SA

17. Most people don't realize how much our lives are controlled by plots hatched in secret places. — SD D A SA

18. Homosexuals are hardly better than criminals and ought to be severely punished. — SD D A SA

19. No sane, normal decent person could ever think of hurting a close friend or relative. — SD D A SA

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